

HISTORICAL PAPER  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
BLOOMSBURY, NEW JERSEY

#149 of 250 copies printed

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 03259 6386

35

1/250

Gc 974.902 B63c

Clyde, Margaret Horner, b.  
1877.

Historical paper, First  
Presbyterian church



*Historical Paper*  
*Read at the Seventy-Fifth*  
*Anniversary of the*  
**Bloomsbury**  
**Presbyterian Church**



Historical Paper  
First Presbyterian Church  
Bloomisbury, New Jersey



*There is a village 'mid the Jersey hills,  
Where stream and valley meet in sweet content —*

75th Anniversary

1857-1932

By  
Margaret H. Clyde

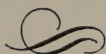


Allen County Public Library  
900 Webster Street  
PO Box 2270  
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270



HISTORICAL PAPER  
READ AT THE SEVENTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE

*Bloomsbury  
Presbyterian Church*



TO ONE whose childhood was bound up with the history of the Bloomsbury Church, there is a temptation, in a paper such as this, to linger over details which—perhaps not important in themselves—help to form a picture of a far-off day, which grows more precious with the passing years.

It is undoubtedly true, also, that ancient events in the history of the church will be of more interest to this audience than recent developments, which are within the memory of a majority of those present.

For both these reasons, therefore, more space has been given to the earlier than to the later history. A greater part of the material has been taken from a History of the Bloomsbury Presbyterian

---

Church by the Rev. John C. Clyde, published in 1884, while the Session's records have been used to bring the history up to date.

It is a pretty well established fact that the first white settlers of Bethlehem township, in which the Bloomsbury Church is located, were Hollanders, and came here in the early seventeen hundreds. We find among them the names, Alpaugh, Boss, Creveling, Duckworth, Hoffman, Housel, Hop-pock, Opdyke, Vleit, and Willever.

That part of the township immediately around Bloomsbury came down through the possession of Robert Johnston, who owned a large tract including not only what later became the village of Bloomsbury but also the farms afterward owned by Moses Robins and John Stute on the west, and the Taylor property on the east, running to the top of the mountain.

Of the land on the north side of the Musconetcong, we find that John Cook of Frankford, Pa., had surveyed to him a tract of one thousand one hundred and eleven acres in Greenwich township fronting on the Musconetcong River. This survey was recorded at Burlington on June 2, 1715.

It was a part of this land which later came into the possession of Robert Kennedy, Captain Benjamin McCullough—who built the house later

---

occupied by Jesse Lake—William J. Smith, Robert I. Smith, and William Sherrer.

The village was named for the Bloom family who were influential in its early history. It was previously known as Johnston's Iron Works, from Robert Johnston's furnace, which was on the Warren County side of the creek, and where business was carried on as early as 1750.

The site of the village was owned as early as 1810 by George Beidleman of Easton. His son William succeeded to the property, and lived on the corner later occupied by Henry Gardner. Mr. Beidleman died there about 1838. The next owner was Henry Jones, who was a distiller and built a still house on the site later occupied by Hoffman's saw mill. The house in which he lived was later occupied by Theodore Melick. His widow built the house where later the Widow Beidleman lived for many years.

As late as 1832 the land now occupied by Bloomsbury was a farm, and there were but five houses on the south side of the creek, the old log house that stood where the brick store was later built; the old Beidleman house; the yellow house down the York road; and the two log houses of John L. and Bartholomew Lott. The first of these was kept for several years as a tavern by Charles

---

Tomlinson, and was the first house to be built.

During these early days the field now occupied by the Bloomsbury Presbyterian Church was included within the bounds of the historic old Greenwich Church, the mother church of this vicinity. During the pastorate of Wm. B. Sloan, which closed in 1834, there was talk of forming a church at Bloomsbury. During the pastorate of Dr. David X. Junkin, from 1835 to 1851, the matter was again brought up, but no definite action was taken. It was during the pastorate of Dr. Aaron H. Hand that it was finally brought to a successful conclusion.

The need for a church at this place was occasioned, at least in part, by the impetus which the place received from the extension of the New Jersey Central Railroad through the Musconetcong valley to Easton, Pennsylvania. This occurred in 1852. It seemed now to be a necessity that a congregation be organized and a church building erected in the locality to accommodate the forty or more Presbyterian families who were residents of the village and its immediate vicinity. The initiatory step seems to have been taken by William J. Smith, who, sometime in August 1857, spoke of the matter to Henry R. Kennedy. Consequently there met, informally, under the trees at the resi-

---

dence of Robert I. Smith on the north side of the Musconetcong, the following gentlemen: James Bird, Henry Gardner, David F. Wean, Henry R. Kennedy, William S. Gardner, Robert I. Smith, and William J. Smith. These men discussed the matter with the result that on Sept. 1, 1857, the friends of the enterprise founded the church.

A subscription paper was circulated, and the following names were attached to it: Henry Gardner, Robert H. Kennedy, James Bird, S. C. Smith, Wm. S. Gardner, John Carter, H. R. Kennedy, Wm. J. Smith, Moses Robins, Joseph Lair, Wm. Tinsman, J. W. Willever, J. Gardner, J. Hance, Wm. S. Hulsizer, Joseph B. Boss, Abram James, Sarah A. Carter, Peter Smith, Jacob Vleit, Hannah Williamson, James J. Willever, Robert I. Smith, J. C. Stewart, Theodore Gardner, Benjamin Parker, Samuel Jeramberger, Charles Petty, John R. Smith, E. T. Vleit, Abram Hance, and David F. Wean.

A petition was presented to Newton Presbytery at its meeting Oct. 6, 1857 asking that the church be organized. The record of the meeting is as follows:

"Certain members of the church of Greenwich, of the Presbytery of Newton, assembled in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Bloomsbury for

---

the purpose of organizing a church to be called the First Presbyterian Church of Bloomsbury, in pursuance of certain action of said Presbytery by appointing a committee thereunto, whereat the Rev. Dr. Wilson presided by order of said committee."

The following members were received for organization: John T. Bird, Wm. J. Smith, Sarah E. Smith, John R. Smith, Sarah C. Smith, Mary Hulsizer, Nancy Mitchell, Lydia Cochran, Sarah Stiner, Margaret Hance, Thomas Young, Rebecca Ann Young, John Hance, Catherine Hance, Jane R. Smith, Annie Parker, Abram Hance, Susan Housel, Susan McPherson, Penelope McPherson, Deborah Young, Peter Hart, Mary Hart, Annie Creveling, Henry Gardner, Elisabeth L. Kennedy, Henry R. Kennedy, Elisabeth Gardner, Miriam K. Kennedy, David F. Wean, Absalom James, Robert I. Smith, Mary H. Smith, Wm. S. Gardner, Rachel Tinsman, Joseph C. Smith, James Bird, Mary Bird, Emily A. Hulsizer, Abram W. Smith, Wm. S. Hulsizer, and Wm. Tinsman—forty-two in all, among whom were twenty-six heads of families.

The same day James Bird, Henry R. Kennedy, Wm. Tinsman and Wm. J. Smith were elected to the office of ruling elders. On the 10th of November the congregation convened in the schoolhouse



---

at which time they elected John T. Bird, Wm. S. Hulsizer, John Hance and Robert I. Smith, deacons. At the same time Wm. S. Gardner, Abram Hance, and Joseph W. Willever were elected trustees.

Following upon this organization meeting, Mr. Adam D. Runkle donated a suitable piece of land to the congregation upon which to erect a house of worship, deeding the same over to them under date of Nov. 19, 1857.

Having heard several candidates, the congregation again convened in the schoolhouse on March 6, 1858, for the purpose of electing a pastor. The choice fell upon Mr. W. E. Westervelt, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Passaic.

The call having been duly placed in his hands and accepted, Mr. Westervelt was ordained and installed on April 15, 1858. Dr. A. H. Hand presided at the meeting, proposed the constitutional questions, and offered the ordaining prayer; Rev. W. C. Cattell preached the sermon; Rev. S. McNair of Washington gave the charge to the pastor; and Rev. George C. Bush, the charge to the people.

At a meeting of the Session held June 13, the pastor was requested to draw up a set of rules governing the singing in the church. This he did,



---

and it is interesting to note what some of the regulations were. For instance, that no one should be a member of the choir who was not a member of the congregation; that the tunes sung should be taken from collections of music approved by the Session; that the practice of singing or performing on the instrument while the congregation was retiring from the house should be prohibited; that not more than one new tune should be introduced on each Sabbath; that seats should be assigned to members of the choir by the leader and that there should be no changing of those seats without his permission; also that the regulations should be signed by the members of the choir.

On Aug. 1, 1858, services were commenced in the schoolhouse at Jugtown, to be held once in four weeks. It was arranged that there should be a prayer meeting at Bloomsbury at such times as the pastor was absent at Jugtown.

During this period the congregation was still worshipping in the schoolhouse, but the church building was nearing completion, and by October was ready to be dedicated. The dedicatory service took place on October 14.

The people had now become possessed of a suitable place in which to hold services. In anticipation of future need, they had also, during the

---

year 1858, purchased a piece of ground adjoining that donated by Mr. Runkle as a site for a church building.

Prospects for a time seemed bright, but later a terrific storm swept through the valley which blew down the steeple, cracked the bell, and otherwise injured the structure. The people, however, soon set to work to repair the damage. On Feb. 9, 1859, a meeting was held at which it was decided to repair the building from the foundation up.

A committee was appointed to ask contributions from the different churches, another committee was appointed to procure a bell. The work was done by the Kellars of Easton, Pa. Wm. Chapman, of Chapman's Quarries, Northampton Co., Pa., from whom had been purchased the original roof, now donated slate for a new roof and had the same put on at his own expense.

Nov. 1, 1859, the hour of the second service, which had been in the afternoon, was changed to evening. May 14, 1860, the congregation was divided into districts to be under the supervision of the different members of the Session for a given time, during which they were to visit the families assigned to them and later report to the Session.

To Mr. Tinsman were assigned all the families on the south side of the Musconetcong and east

---

of Mrs. Widow Boss's place, whose house is the starting point; to Mr. Bird were assigned all the families on the same side of the creek westward from his own house, as far as Church street, with three families on it; to Mr. Kennedy were assigned all the families on the north side of the creek; and to Mr. Smith those on the south side westward from Church street and southward from Alexandria street to the uttermost bounds of the congregation, excepting the families of Messrs. John R. Smith and Peter R. Smith.

On Oct. 14, 1860, Mrs. H. R. Kennedy resigned the position of organist and Miss Mary Smith was appointed to fill the vacancy.

Mr. Westervelt having expressed a desire to resign the pastorate, a special meeting of Presbytery was held at Bloomsbury July 2, 1861, at which the pastoral relation was dissolved.

On July 7, 1861, Mr. Joseph S. VanDyke, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Elisabethtown, was asked to preach as a candidate. This he did and after preaching on two later occasions, was elected pastor on Aug. 6. His salary was to be \$650 payable semiannually. On Oct. 10, he preached his ordination sermon and was installed pastor of the church.

In 1861 the Bloomsbury Church, with others,

---

was transferred from the Presbytery of Newton to that of Raritan. On March 27, 1864, it was decided that preaching services should be held thereafter every fourth Sunday alternately at Garrison's, Bethlehem, and Franklin schoolhouses. On Nov. 11, 1866, it was arranged to hold a sessional prayer meeting on the first Sabbath of each month, and a communicant's prayer meeting each Sabbath previous to communion.

On Dec. 28, 1867, a meeting was held at which it was decided to increase the pastor's salary to one thousand dollars, the pews being assessed to raise that amount. At a meeting on May 1, 1869 the congregation united with the pastor in asking the Presbytery of Raritan to dissolve the pastoral relation, in order that Mr. VanDyke might accept a call to the Second Presbyterian Church of Cranbury, N. J. The pastoral relation was dissolved on May 4.

At the close of Mr. VanDyke's pastorate it became evident that the erection of a parsonage was essential to the prosperity of the church. Accordingly it was decided to build such a house on the land purchased from Mr. Runkle.

A building committee was appointed consisting of Messrs. John Peters and Moses Robins. At a congregational meeting held Nov. 9, 1869, they

---

gave their report upon the building which was by this time finished. The thanks of the congregation having been given them, attention was turned to the matter of building a barn for the use of the pastor. To this end Henry R. Kennedy purchased from the New Jersey Central R. R. Co., a lot which adjoined the church lot on the north and which fronted on the center street of the village. This he donated to the congregation and upon it the barn was placed.

It was during this year that the church called its next pastor, Rev. H. B. Scott. In the same year the congregation was again divided up for visitation as follows: south of Musconetcong and east of the north and south avenue, including the families of George W. Race and Charles Petty, to the care of Elder Wm. Tinsman; south of Bird St. and east of Church St., Elder James Bird; north of Bird St., and west of Church St., Elder Wm. J. Smith; north of the Musconetcong, Elder Henry R. Kennedy.

In 1870, at the reunion of the two branches of the Presbyterian Church, the Bloomsbury Church was again placed under the care of Newton Presbytery.

At a congregational meeting held Jan. 20, 1872, it was decided to increase the pastor's salary to

---

\$1200. It was during this year also that the church raised \$1500 in order to secure a bequest of \$1000 left to it under the will of John R. Smith.

In 1873 we find certain rules adopted for the government of the sexton.

He was to ring the bell at stated hours; sweep the body of the church, gallery, etc., once each month; dust the seats every two weeks; basement to be kept clean, and all ashes, coal, cinders, etc., to be kept from around the furnaces; lamps to be properly filled, trimmed and cleansed not less frequently than once in two weeks; gates to be properly opened and closed, and church grounds to be kept clear of all loose rubbish; the graveyard to be mowed twice each year; the earth from graves to be removed from each plot within one month from the time of digging.

At a meeting on April 18, 1873, action was taken with reference to taking down the spire of the church, and rebuilding it, as it had been struck by lightning. In July following we find that both church and parsonage were undergoing repairs. It was decided at this time to have the vestibule frescoed in oil instead of water colors, as originally agreed upon.

At a meeting December 8, 1877, it was decided to purchase two lots of fifty feet each, making one

---

hundred by one hundred and fifty feet, "lying contiguous to the graveyard", and to enclose the same with a good substantial fence.

In 1878, the Louise F. Kennedy Fund, for the benefit of the poor of the congregation, was established. Miss Kennedy was a daughter of Elder Henry R. Kennedy, and died in the bloom of young womanhood. In accordance with her wishes, her father, after her death, made over to the congregation three shares of the capital stock of the Bloomsbury National Bank, for this benevolent purpose.

During this same year the Rev. H. B. Scott presented his resignation, to take effect January 1, 1879, and on January 5, the Rev. Wm. Thompson preached in the church, and declared the pulpit vacant.

At a congregational meeting held June 5, following, the Rev. John C. Clyde was elected pastor. Mr. Clyde accepted the call and commenced his labors on July first. One of the first innovations of his pastorate was the adoption of a new hymn-book, The Presbyterian Hymnal.

At the Christmas holidays we read of a public dinner being given in the town hall, and early in 1880 a Mite Society was started.

In a report to Presbytery April 2, 1881, we read



---

that funds were raised for the benefit of the Sabbath-School; that the accommodations of the school in the lecture room had been greatly improved; that the unsightly wooden supports had been replaced by suitable iron ones; that chairs instead of wooden benches were in use; that the pulpit was altered and the room generally renovated and relighted. A new library also was purchased, and hymn-books provided. On June 4, 1881, occurred the death of Elder Wm. Tinsman.

In 1882, we read, the sidewalks leading to the church becoming dilapidated, the congregation united with the Methodist Church in an excursion to Coney Island, to repair the same for the benefit of both congregations. At the annual Christmas supper further funds were raised, and stone flagging was laid in front of all the church property except the south side, where it was deemed not necessary.

These few excerpts from the history written by the pastor show the progress of the church up to this time.

During the year 1884, we read of the death of Elder Henry R. Kennedy, who had been one of the founders of the church. He died on March 26, and in May we read of the election of the following elders: Theodore Tinsman and A. G. Crevel-

---

ing. On September 13, Wm. J. Smith resigned as Clerk of Session and Theodore Tinsman was elected in his place. At the same meeting, the following Sunday School officers were confirmed by the Session:

*Acting Superintendent, Theodore Tinsman*

*Retired Superintendent, William J. Smith*

*Secretary, A. G. Creveling*

*Librarian, Louis Anderson*

*Treasurer, Frank P. Cline*

On April 4, 1885, a Mission Band from the young people of the Sunday School was organized.

In June, 1888, a four day evangelistic meeting was held under the leadership of Rev. B. Fay Mills. As a result of this, twenty-nine persons were received into the church.

On November 3, 1889, occurred the death of Elder Moses Robins.

On April 3, 1892, in addition to the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, already functioning, we read that a band of King's Daughters was organized. During this year also, the church building was remodeled and refitted.

On January 15, 1894, occurred the death of Elder Wm. J. Smith.

On March 23, 1895 Elder Judge A. C. Smith died and on Dec. 1, of the same year the following

---

elders were elected; Dr. W. R. Little, Wm. H. Parker, and Wm. Sherrer.

On April 4, 1896, a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was organized. Also action was taken towards purchasing an organ for the Sunday School.

During 1897 the church lost two of its elders by death, Elder Wm. H. Parker dying on Jan. 13, and Dr. W. R. Little on Feb. 13.

On April 20, 1901, the resignation of the pastor, Rev. J. C. Clyde, was accepted, and on June 6, 1902, Rev. I. F. Wagner was elected pastor.

In 1903 we read that a Pastor's Class and a Home Department had been organized in the Sunday School, and that the Ladies' Aid had been active in helping toward painting and repairs to the church.

At a meeting on April 11, 1903, we find a resolution that no more aliens and paupers be buried in the cemetery. Also that an iron fence had been placed around it.

In 1906, evangelistic services were held from January 8 to 21 in which the pastor was assisted by the Rev. Hugh Walker of Greenwich.

In 1907, the Ladies' Aid put a new carpet in the church and two stained glass windows.

On Oct. 6, 1907, the system of rotary eldership

---

was adopted. On Dec. 15, a meeting was held at which the congregation concurred with the pastor in his request for a dissolution of the pastoral relationship, to take effect Feb. 1, 1908.

May 9, 1908, Rev. A. B. Williamson was elected pastor. In January 1909, a Young Men's Prayer Meeting was started, led by the pastor.

It was during the season of 1909-1910, that the Sunday School room was renovated, a new set of dishes purchased for the church, and a new bathroom installed in the manse.

During the season 1910-1911, we read that there was no preaching service for nine weeks, owing to the illness of the pastor. This entry was a forecast of the shadow soon to fall upon the church, for under date of Sept. 15, 1915, we find the following resolutions:

Whereas, it has pleased God in his infinite wisdom to have removed from our midst our beloved pastor and kind friend, Rev. A. B. Williamson, and

Whereas, we bow in humble submission to His divine will knowing that He has but called His child to his home on high:

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Bloomsbury, N. J., in Session assembled, representing the congregation so long and zealously ministered unto, do

---

hereby offer and extend our loving sympathy to the dear family of our good pastor, with all assurances of our lasting esteem, and also

Be it resolved, that copies of these resolutions be handed to the family as a memorial of our respect and regard and also be spread upon our minute books in permanent record of the feelings of this congregation, as witnessed by its elders.

*Signed*

*Theodore Tinsman*

*Josiah A. S. Stone*

*William Sherrer*

*John Lewdrop*

On Oct. 25, 1915, Dr. J. Scott Butt was elected pastor.

It was during his pastorate, that the interior and exterior of the church were beautified, and new pews installed in the main auditorium.

On Nov. 24, 1918, the system of rotary eldership was abandoned, and permanent eldership once more established.

On September 15, 1919, the pastor asked the congregation to unite with him in asking for a dissolution of the pastoral relation, and the congregation agreed.

On Dec. 10, 1919, a call was given to Rev. Wm. Hawthorne. An early event in this pastorate was

---

the purchase of a new Sunday School Library. On No. 22, 1922, his resignation was accepted.

June 5, 1923, Rev. David I. Schaeffer was elected pastor. It was during his pastorate that Elder Wm. Sherrer resigned as Clerk of Session, and F. B. Morgan was elected to succeed him. In August, 1926, Mr. Schaeffer presented his resignation to take effect Jan. 1, 1927.

On March 23, 1927, Rev. Gladstone P. Cooley was elected pastor. Mr. Cooley was licensed by Newton Presbytery June 28, and ordained and installed at Bloomsbury on July 20, 1927.

Even upon this pastorate, so happily continuing, has fallen the shadow of the angel of death, for on Nov. 20, 1929, Elder Wm. Sherrer, Clerk of Session for nearly twenty years, died at the age of eighty-seven years, and in June just past, Elder Theodore Tinsman, whose many years of service as Superintendent of the Sunday School have left an impress upon a whole generation, passed away at the age of ninety-two.

It is not upon the past, however, that we must dwell tonight. For in the record of the present we find bright promise for the future.

At the seventy-fifth annual congregational meeting, which also marked the end of five years of

---

ministry by Rev. Mr. Cooley, reports showed the church to be in a healthy condition.

The net increase in church membership during this five year period has exceeded 16 per cent. During this time also, a new manse has been erected, the church building re-roofed, re-carpeted, and re-decorated, all the church buildings repainted; a new steeple erected to replace one destroyed by a storm, shrubbery planted about the church grounds and the general physical condition of the church property otherwise improved. In spite of these unusual expenditures, the end of the present fiscal year found all church debts paid.

In an era such as this, the present prosperity of the church stands like a beacon. May it point the way to a still more glorious future.





250 copies of this book  
have been printed by the  
Federal Advertising Agency Press  
of which this copy is  
Number 149

*Compliments of Robert Tinsman*









